

**DEVELOPMENT OF AN EMPLOYEE EVALUATION AND APPRAISAL
SYSTEM FOR THE WATERBURY FIRE DEPARTMENT**

EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The Waterbury Fire Department does not systematically conduct formal employee evaluations and appraisals. This research project examined the need for a formal employee evaluation system and the problems that the Waterbury Fire Department would need to overcome in developing such a system.

The purpose of this research project was to examine the need for a formal employee appraisal and evaluation system in the Waterbury Fire Department. In doing so, the author examined the purposes an employee appraisal and evaluation system might serve the Waterbury Fire Department. It determined that an employee appraisal and evaluation system was required, how might the Waterbury Fire Department develop such a system and what obstacles would the department need to overcome in instituting such a system? In the process of examining employee appraisal and evaluation systems, the author surveyed career fire departments in Connecticut and throughout the northeastern states to examine how other departments were using employee evaluation systems.

This research project employed historical, descriptive, and evaluative research methodologies. The author reviewed texts and other research that had specifically examined fire service employee appraisal systems. Internal surveys were conducted that examined what the history of appraisals had been with the employees of the Waterbury Fire Department and what the future use of an appraisal system might be.

Interviews were conducted with the City of Waterbury Personnel Department and with the Union to discuss how such a system might be used and what problems

they felt would need to be addressed in developing the system. Lastly, the author surveyed other fire departments that were similar to the Waterbury Fire Department in size, population served and regional location to determine how they use employee evaluations and appraisal systems.

Specifically, the author researched the following questions:

1. Is there a need for the Waterbury Fire Department to develop a formal employee appraisal and evaluation system?
2. What will be the purpose of an employee appraisal and evaluation system within the Waterbury Fire Department? Further, what evaluation and appraisal systems are other fire departments using to evaluate employees and for what purpose?
3. What procedures will be used and what obstacles will the department need to overcome in developing an employee appraisal and evaluation system?

The results of this research showed that there is a need for a formal evaluation and appraisal system in the Waterbury Fire Department. To develop a system the Department will be required to seek input from employees within the Department. Besides developing the system in cooperation with the Union, Civil Service, and employees, the Department will need to explain the purpose for the system to all employees. A survey of employees found that employees generally had good feelings regarding evaluations. Those employees saw a need for such a system but had concerns about how it would be instituted and used. The research further found that a number of Departments do not have formal employee evaluation systems. Many of those that do have such systems use the appraisals of their employees for a number of purposes.

The recommendations included the development of a formal employee evaluation and appraisal system for the Waterbury Fire Department. In developing the system, the Department must utilize Department personnel and in cooperation with the local bargaining unit. Those groups should also determine how the system would be used.

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INTRODUCTION

The Waterbury Fire Department does not systematically conduct formal employee evaluations and appraisals. This research project examined the need for a formal employee evaluation system and the problems that the Waterbury Fire Department would need to overcome in developing such a system.

Evaluations and appraisals of personnel are conducted only at the conclusion of a new recruit employee's six-month long probationary period and at the conclusion of a newly promoted employee's six-month long probationary period. This evaluation is a requirement of the City of Waterbury's Civil Service Commission. (Civil Service Rules and Regulations, 1995) as the final phase of the hiring and promotional examination process. Successful completion of the probationary period requires all new fire fighter recruits and officers promoted to a higher classification to receive a positive evaluation from their supervisor. The Civil Service Commission has used the same document (Appendix A) for at least the last thirty-four years. All promotions occur through the civil service process.

The Bureau of Instruction of Training currently evaluates employees during training exercises and the bureau maintains those records. The feedback to employees regarding these training evaluations is immediate and there seldom is any follow-up with the employee.

The Fire Department has never developed a system or program that would allow the department to evaluate its employees. The evaluation of employees is left to an informal method whereby experienced chief officers, officers, bureau heads and peers

essentially evaluate one another. Members of the Waterbury Fire Department find this informal method of evaluating and counseling to be adequately effective. This system of informal evaluation has the potential to do more damage than good.

The Waterbury Fire Department recently promoted a new Fire Chief. All Deputy Fire Chiefs and bureau heads have been promoted to those positions within the last year. These positions have been filled from fire officers from within the department thus causing numerous vacancies in the lower ranks. Through the civil service promotional examination process, many other officer positions in the Department have been filled in the past two years. The department has also hired a number of new employees to fill the positions vacated by the new officers. As such, it is difficult to assess the performance and effectiveness of these new officers and firefighters because of the lack of a formal evaluation and appraisal system. The informal process that had been used in the past is not effective, as there is a very limited amount of experienced members of the department to rely on.

The purpose of this research project is threefold; 1) to examine if there is a need for the Waterbury Fire Department to develop a formal employee appraisal and evaluation system 2) what will be the purpose within the Waterbury Fire Department for an employee appraisal and evaluation system; and 3) if it is determined that an employee appraisal and evaluation system is required, how will it be developed and what obstacles will the department need to overcome in instituting such a system. The research project includes information from fire departments throughout Connecticut and the northeast.

The project will identify how a performance appraisal and evaluation system can be developed for the Waterbury Fire Department including obstacles that might occur with the employees. This research project employed historical, descriptive, and evaluative research methodologies to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a need for the Waterbury Fire Department to develop a formal employee appraisal and evaluation system?
2. What will be the purpose of an employee appraisal and evaluation system within the Waterbury Fire Department? Further, what evaluation and appraisal systems are other fire departments using to evaluate employees and for what purpose?
3. What procedures will be used and what obstacles will the department need to overcome in developing an employee appraisal and evaluation system?

BACKGROUND and SIGNIFICANCE

The Fire Fighters, Officers, Chief Officers, and Bureau Heads of the Waterbury Fire Department recognize the need for a formal evaluation system for all employees. Presently, the only time that an employee is formally evaluated is during the completion of their six-month probationary period. The Civil Service Commission requires these evaluations. (Civil Service Rules and Regulations 1995) The evaluation is the final phase for all new employees and those employees promoted to a higher classification within the fire department. The City of Waterbury Personnel Director provides the instrument (Appendix A) that as is required as part of his duties. The personnel director is responsible for the administration of the Civil Service rules and regulations as outlined

in the Charter of the City of Waterbury. (City of Waterbury Charter, 1970) The employee's immediate supervisor conducts the evaluations.

Today, more than at any other time, taxpayers and citizens in the community expect accountability from the organizations that they fund and from whom they receive services. "Organizational commitment to an effective performance appraisal system can increase accountability as well as measure organizational output. (Diaz, 1996 p.1). In order for a fire department to perform successfully the resources that it needs must be effective. "Business enterprise (or any other institution) has only one true resource: man. It performs by making human resources better." (Drucker, 1973 p.41) Peter Drucker goes on to explain that, "The purpose of any organization is to enable common men to do uncommon things. It is the test of an organization to make human beings perform better than they seem capable of, to bring out whatever strengths there is in its members, and to use each man's strength to help all the others perform. It is the task of organization at the same time to neutralize the individual weakness of its members. The test of an organization is in the spirit of performance. The spirit of performance requires that there be full scope for individual excellence. The focus must be on the strengths of a man – on what he can do rather than on what he cannot do" (Drucker, 1973 p.455)

Performance appraisal systems began as simple methods of income justification. That is, appraisal was used to decide whether the salary or wage of an individual employee to be justified. The first formal use of an employee evaluation system was time and motion studies conducted by Frederick Taylor in 1910. As a formal management system to be used to evaluate work performance, employee appraisals date from the time of the Second World War - not more than 60 years ago. During the

1950s in the United States, the potential usefulness of employee appraisals as a tool for motivation and development was gradually recognized. The general model of performance appraisal, as known today, began during that time. In 1957 Douglas McGregor, an expert on human relations, defined the three basic objectives of performance appraisals; (1) providing a systematic approach to subordinate development through coaching and counseling, so that individuals may develop to the full extent of their potentials; (2) letting people know where they stand, how well they are doing, and what behavioral changes are desired; and (3) generating valid data for administrative decision making in the short and the long run. (Sashkin, 1992 p.2)

In that the Waterbury Fire Department has no formal appraisal system, members have used this basic informal appraisal method. The Department has relied on this method and used it for determining assignments and transfers in the same classification. Sometimes this basic informal system succeeded in getting results. The author is aware of numerous times when the assignment or transfer was neither in the best interest of the department nor the individual.

Evidence seems to suggest clearly that employees welcome performance evaluation as a major way of learning how they are doing and believe that without a formal program their supervisor would speak to them only when they did something wrong. (Lopez, 1968 p.33)

As shown in Table 3, a survey of members of the Waterbury Fire Department, the majority of members feel that formal appraisals should be used for management decisions. Though the employees felt this way, the bargaining unit had concerns about the use of the system. According to Peter Carozza, " The Waterbury Fire Department is

obligated under the Municipal Employees Relation Act (MERA) to negotiate with the bargaining unit with regards to the use of a formal employee evaluation and appraisal system” (Carozza, 1999)

The National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program requires each participant to complete an applied research project within six months of completing the Executive Development module. This research project relates to the Executive Development course Unit 5 *Following and Leading*. As part of the Executive Development course the author was required to evaluate himself in specific management development areas as well as peers from his own Department. The management of others and of self is directly related to employee appraisal and evaluations systems.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of the literature review was to gather pertinent information on employee evaluation and performance appraisals. Sources from the private sector and the public sector, specifically emergency service organizations, were utilized in an effort to maximize the background information for developing solutions. Numerous texts, research articles and periodicals discuss the need for organizations to use some method of formal employee evaluation and appraisals. Many of these sources discuss how an organization can develop, adopt, or refine an employee evaluation system.

Research Question #1 - Is there a need for the Waterbury Fire Department to develop a formal employee appraisal and evaluation system?

In his text *Evaluating Employee Personnel* Felix Lopez states that “ If an organization desires to foster excellence and self-renewal, it must devote considerable effort to the administration of an effective evaluation program.” (Lopez 1968 p.20)

Performance appraisal is a human process, and it is inevitable in any private or public sector work organization. The only basic questions are (1) will the appraisal be formal or informal, and (2) will the system be accepted and used by managers as intended by the creators of the system? (Patten, 1982 p. 2)

People are the key to the effective functioning of labor-intensive organizations. (Stuert and Sullivan 1991 p. 1)

Fire officers and fire fighters must understand what is expected of them and how well they are meeting those expectations. They must understand the process of employee evaluations and how they must meet individual as well as department goals.

There is a basic human tendency to make judgements about those that one is working with, as well as about oneself. Appraisal is inevitable. In the absence of a carefully structured system of appraisal, people will tend to judge the work performance of others, including subordinates, arbitrarily and informally. Every supervisor engages constantly in the process of comparatively rating subordinates, whether there is a formal or informal rating system or none at all. (Iannone, 1994 p. 202)

This natural human inclination to judge can create serious motivational, ethical and legal problems in the workplace. Without a structured appraisal system, there is little chance of ensuring that the judgements made will be lawful, fair, defensible and accurate. It is naïve not to recognize that when one person working under the direction of another in an organization, there is likely to be an evaluation process in place, whether it is informal and subjective, or informal and more objective. (Stuert and Sullivan 1991 p. 1)

Informal

evaluations will tend to be based on one's own priorities, biases, expectations, and values. They may or may not be consistent with those of the fire department. Even when there were no formal methods, people will continue to evaluate each other's work. If supervisors make decisions based on informal impressions, they will be wrong most of the time. (ICMA 1995 p.92) Work place decisions based on informal evaluations have the potential to be damaging to both the employee and the organization.

An organization cannot wait until they have developed a perfect system before instituting a formal employee evaluation and appraisal system. No system of measuring the qualities of human being is perfect because personal bias and subjectivity cannot be entirely eliminated from appraisals. In the agencies where no evaluation system has been adopted, each supervisor is left to his own devices to evaluate his personnel comparatively. (Iannone, 1994 p. 202) The legislation governing the hiring, the firing, and dismissal of employees has reduced flexibility even as personnel costs have accelerated. (Stuert and Sullivan 1991 p. 1)

The formal appraisal offers additional benefits to the employee and the organization. Research offers these as reasons for a formal system: (Hansen, 1994)

- Clarification and verification of the employee's job description.
- The employee and manager can mutually establish a performance baseline.
- Exceptional accomplishments and recognitions can be recorded.
- Goals to be mutually agreed to and commitments by both the supervisor and employee can be documented.
- Discussion of employee career goals.
- The written records of the appraisal can be used to support promotions, merit increases, demotions, and terminations when necessary.

The development and adoption of such a system means improving employee morale by giving employees recognition. It is often found that the effectiveness of the working force is dependent, at least in part, upon the recognition it receives from management for its effort. (Iannone, 1994 p. 203)

Numerous formal appraisal systems are in use by fire departments. In evaluating an individual's performance it is assumed that the employee performance can be observed and assessed although it can not be objectively measured by units produced in elapsed time. (Patten, 1982 p. 10) This is especially true in the fire service where many of the tasks which are required to be done by fire fighters assigned to suppression forces can not be easily observed by supervisors that are also a part of the evolution and process. The formal process of evaluating personnel enables the fire department to develop criteria and job standards that can be analyzed objectively.

Unless an organization pursues a policy of viewing continuously the past performance, present progress, and future prospects of its human resources, it must manage them through intuition and tradition. (Lopez 1968 p.25)

Research Question #2- What will be the purpose of an employee appraisal and evaluation system within the Waterbury Fire Department? Further, what evaluation and appraisal systems are other fire departments using to evaluate employees and for what purpose?

Employee evaluations are utilized by fire departments for a number of purposes. Evaluations today are aimed at working out better methods of doing the job in the future instead of emphasizing and dwelling on what happened in the past. (ICMA, 1995 p.90)

The International City/County Management Association outlines the following purposes for an organization to use a formal employee evaluation system:

- To help employees better develop their work potential
- To establish benchmarks and goals for the fire department, supervisor and fire fighters to use to measure performance
- Standardizes job performance
- It provides valuable feedback for the fire department, supervisor and fire fighters
- The formal evaluation and appraisal system enables the fire department to develop criteria and job standards that cannot be analyzed objectively
- It is a system that can be used to motivate employees – through compensation or increased self esteem

The Waterbury Civil Service Commission uses a system for evaluating the work performance of all employees in the competitive division. All positions in the Waterbury Fire Department are classified in the competitive division. The primary purpose of the employee performance evaluation is to inform employees on how well they are performing their work and how they can improve their work performance. It may also be used to determine salary increments; as a factor in determining lay-off; as a basis for training, promotion, demotion, transfer or dismissal; and for such purposes as set forth in the regulations. (Civil Service Commission, 1995 p. 20)

The Waterbury Fire Department does not use the Civil Service Commission's system of employee evaluations except for promotional and new recruit probationary purposes. Connecticut labor laws allows for the rules of the Civil Service Commission to

be superceded by the municipal bargaining unit and the municipality. The MERA (Municipal Employee Relations Act) allows for the use of employee and appraisals but requires both parties to determine how the evaluations are to be used. The statute requires negotiations on the content and use of employee evaluations. (MERA) There is no such agreement between the City and the Union.

The main purpose of a performance appraisal is to encourage employees or to give them recognition for a job well done. Tying money and merit reviews at a supervisor's level can culminate in various forms of abuse and unpleasantness. When these performance appraisals occur managers and employees enter the situation defensively. The importance of combining appraisals for pay with appraisals for development is that the former will eclipse the latter in the appraisal session and that the manager will structure the appraisal solely to those that are not consonant with the pay decision. (Patten, 1982 p. 29)

Formal employee evaluations and appraisals require the evaluations to be reduced in some form to writing. These documents will become a part of the employee's personnel file and as such, they have the potential for use in future decisions regarding the employee. An employee's personnel file is not a matter of public record. These evaluations thus are not open for public viewing and are considered a document that falls under the Privacy Acts of 1974 and are not available under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) in Connecticut.

When due process in employment is followed, managers must be aware of performance on the job as the basis for taking a disciplinary action against an employee. (Patten, 1982 p. 43) The performance appraisal is not by intent a punitive

tool, though when it is applied to document negative behavior or performance and then later used as evidence during a due process procedure it can substantiate a manager's decision.

Research Question #3- What procedures will be used and what obstacles will the department need to overcome in developing an employee appraisal and evaluation system?

The process for developing an employee evaluation and appraisal system must include the analysis of employee tasks and duties that the department considers integral in job content. The organization must evaluate employee performance based on an adequate and realistic understanding of what the job entails. (Patten, 1982 p. 37)

The International City/County Management Association states that no matter what type of performance appraisal system a department uses, to be effective it must have the following characteristics:

- The system is based on a job analysis.
- The purpose of the system is clearly defined.
- The system is based on job-related behavior and clearly defined performance standards.
- Appraisals are conducted on an ongoing basis.
- Appraisers receive intensive training in the use of appraisal techniques and in counseling employees.
- Provision is made for appraisal discussion and positive feedback Performance strengths and weaknesses are clearly spelled out along with a clear plan of action of what is needed to correct faults and improving performance.

- There is a clear link between good performance and a reward system.

It is imperative to document all appraisal efforts to ensure fairness to employees and to avoid inviting grievances. (ICMA, 1988 p. 274)

One obstacle to an effective performance system can be the lack of communication to the organization describing what the system was intended to do. Donald Kirkpatrick explains that “communicate” means to create understanding. This means that everyone involved in the program must understand the what, why, when, where and how. (Kirkpatrick, 1982 p.92) The best method to do this is through meetings that allow discussion with all employees. The organization must be prepared for the possibility that employees, including supervisors, may resist the system when initiated. It is important that the Department develop a plan for ways to meet employee resistance. Separate training for supervisors in the use of the system will also be required. It is not enough to create understanding and sell managers on the program. They must have the necessary skills to implement the program. . (Kirkpatrick, 1982 p.94) No matter what type of instrument is used to track and document employee performance throughout the review period there is the possibility of supervisors to include unclear and often legally inappropriate wording during the appraisal process. The success or failure of the appraisal depends on the attitude, training and skill of the supervisor in delivering meaningful feedback to the employee. (Hansen, 1994)

Another problem that organizations have had is the poor documentation of an employee's behavior. The use of a standardized instrument that supervisors are trained in using provides consistent criteria and a systematic method of evaluating performance. This allows organizations to define performance criteria and standards.

Fire departments must be aware of legal requirements that exist at the federal, state, and local levels regarding employee performance appraisals. These regulations require that appraisals be:

- Job related
- Collected under formal conditions
- Reviewed before the evaluation to eliminate race, color, sex, religion, sexual orientation, handicap, or veteran's status

"The employer's most potent legal defense of a performance review system is in the area of job-relatedness. The primary vehicle for job-relatedness of most court decisions about employees is job analysis which is then reflected in job descriptions and measured through performance review." (Stuert, Sullivan 1991 p.26) "Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures" issued by Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the United States Department of Labor in 1978 requires that employee appraisal systems be job related. Under these guidelines, trait-based systems are impossible to defend in court. Although difficult to defend behavior-based systems have held up in court if they are found valid and if they are in direct relationship to job-related criteria. Appraisal systems that are strictly based on quantitative analysis are easier to support. "Courts have thrown out subjective ratings such as "leadership, appearance, ethical habits, loyalty to the organization," etc." (Stuert, Sullivan 1991 p. 26) Appraisal systems must be objective and standardized. The appraisal must be job related, developed through a formal job analysis, and administered by trained supervisors.

The following are a list of pertinent regulations that to review when developing appraisal programs:

- EEOC Guidelines – Equal Employment and Opportunities Commission Guidelines of 1966 and 1970 cover all employers with fifteen or more people. The EEOC guidelines states that extensive efforts to develop affirmative action procedures, analyses, data collection systems, report forms and file written policy statements are meaningless unless the end product will be measurable, yearly improvements in hiring, training, and promotion of minorities and females in all parts of the organization. The EEOC has determined that performance appraisals are the same as paper-and-pencil tests and must meet the same standard.
- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 – Federal law that outlines that no personnel practice that adversely affects certain classes of individuals is deemed unlawful unless an organization can demonstrate that those policies and practices are justified by business necessity.
- Privacy Act of 1974 - Federal law that guards against illegal use of employee records.
- Connecticut Municipal Employee Relations Act - A State of Connecticut legislation that regulates the subjects and processes for negotiating. The subject of employee appraisals and how those appraisal systems are used are mandatory subjects of bargaining.

A number of court rulings that have affected performance appraisal systems.

(Williams, 1991) In the landmark case, *Griggs v. Duke Power Company*, 401 u.s. 424

(1971), the central issue was that an educational restriction on an employment decision is illegal unless it can be proved that a “bona fide occupational qualification” (BFOQ) exists between the test and the actual job performance. It also established that the burden of proof for a BFOQ lies with the employer. This decision extended previous rulings to include employee appraisals. Employee evaluations may only measure areas that specifically are a part of the employee’s duties. In *Brito. V. Zia Company 7th District Court of Appeals* (1973) the decision carried *Griggs V. Duke* further into the workplace. It held performance appraisals to be tests and to consider them the same as any other promotional or employment decision instrument. Further, it said that the establishment of a BFOQ required more than simple face validity. It must also must “predict performance in the job being tested”. This “empirical evidence test” has proven nearly impossible to meet except on very menial forms of performance. Later, *Davis v. Washington, D.C.* 426 US 229 (1976) held that only face-validity was required in tests for selection and training of police officers. The face validity test means that the construct (i.e. “personal appearance”) appears to be directly related to job requirements and performance.

The courts continued to define the validity of testing and evaluation systems in *Moody v. Albermarle Paper Company.* 474 F. 2d 134. (1973). *The 4th District Court of Appeals* held that supervisors must use the same type of criteria, rather than unsupported opinion, in making employment decisions. Performance ratings that do not have a evaluation and job specification base have a built-in bias and must be validated statistically. This made the use of a trait type of rating instrument a poor choice as it left to much discretion to a supervisor. In 1971 *Allen v. City of Mobile* (1971), and again in

1976, *McDonald v. Santa Fe Transportation Co. Inc.*, (1976), the court reaffirmed the requirements that performance appraisals could not discriminate against or for a protect class (reverse discrimination is also illegal under the Civil Rights Laws).

PROCEDURES

Definition of Terms

BFOQ - “bona fide occupational qualification” .The requirements and personal qualifications that a candidate must possess for a position.

C. G. S. – Connecticut General Statutes are the laws that are used to govern the State of Connecticut.

Collective Bargaining Unit – A group of individuals who are represented by a union for discussing all matters of wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment when such occurs with the municipality.

Employee Appraisal – Process of reviewing an employee’s behavior as it relates to their job.

Feedback - Process of communication between supervisor and employee to let employee know their strengths, weaknesses and if they are reaching organizational and personal goals.

Freedom of Information (FOI) – Federal and state laws regarding the privacy of individuals and organizations. These laws outline what information is allowed to be made available to the public for viewing and distribution.

Job Analysis – The process of observing and recording information about the work performed by a specific employee in a specific position. Analysis is accomplished

through systematic observation of the job activities of each person including employee interviews.

Job Classification - The process of categorizing positions, that have been analyzed and descriptions written, according to the type of work performed, the skills required, and the other job related factors. Classification is accomplished by reviewing jobs, and grouping individuals into a classification hierarchy for the entire staff of the department.

Job Description - The cumulative step of collecting, verifying, and correlating information about tasks and the content of a job. It is a written description of a group of positions.

Job Evaluation – The process of comparing jobs for classification and pay purposes.

Job Specification – Sets forth the minimum requirements and personal qualifications specified for those persons who might be candidates for a position in the department including such things as work experience, skills, and abilities.

Just Cause – The standard that allows formal discipline of an employee by following basic elements for discipline.

M.E.R.A. – Municipal Employee Relations Act (Connecticut General Statute § 7-467 – § 7-477 , et seq.) is the state legislation that regulates the subjects and processes for negotiating collective bargaining between a municipality and the bargaining unit .

Merit Pay Raise – A method of determining the amount of wage increase that an employee will be entitled to based on an evaluation.

Personnel Evaluation – The process of reviewing an employee's appraisal and developing future work objectives through feedback by the supervisor.

U.P.F.F.A. - Uniformed Professional Fire Fighters Association (UPFFA) of Connecticut is the labor organization affiliated with the International Association Fire Fighters representing 35 unionized career fire departments in Connecticut.

Research Methodology

This research project used a combination of historical, descriptive, and evaluative methodologies to examine how employee evaluation and appraisal systems are being used in organizations. The research assessed how employees of the Waterbury Fire Department view evaluations. The project further examined how fire departments in the northeast are using employee evaluations and appraisals. Finally, the research investigated what input and concerns that both the union and city might have in instituting and using employee evaluations.

Literature Review

The research procedures used in preparing this paper began with a literature review at the Learning Resource Center at the National Emergency Training Center in June 1999. Subsequent resources were loaned from the Learning Resource Center through the Interlibrary Loan Program (ILL). These reviews included research that had been conducted by previous students in the Executive Officer Program, trade journals, magazines and textbooks on subjects that contained articles on employee appraisals and evaluations. Additional literature reviews were conducted at the Northwestern Connecticut Community College Library, Winsted, CT, and the Silas Bronson Library, Waterbury, CT. These reviews included textbooks that have been written about employee reviews and appraisals.

Surveys

A survey instrument entitled "Employee Evaluation and Appraisal" (Appendix E) was developed to gather information from members of Waterbury Fire Department. The information sought included their experiences with evaluations during their employment with the Department; when should evaluations be conducted; who should conduct and review the appraisals; how the personnel appraisal system should be utilized; and how a personnel appraisal system should be developed. Three hundred two surveys were delivered to the employee's duty station or bureau. One hundred seventy-six were completed and returned (58%).

A second survey instrument entitled "Employee Evaluation and Appraisal," (Appendix D) was developed to gather information about the present practices and possible future uses of personnel evaluations and appraisals in other fire departments. A total of eighty-five surveys were mailed to career fire departments in Connecticut and career fire departments similar in size and/or population served as the Waterbury Fire Department that are located in the northeastern states. There were fifty-three surveys completed and returned (62%).

The results of these surveys were entered into a relational database (Filemaker Pro3 for Windows) and analyzed. The results were tabulated and entered into a computerized spreadsheet (Excel) and were used to assist in answering the research questions.

Interviews

Peter Carozza, President of the Uniformed Professional Fire Fighters Association (UPFFA) of Connecticut was interviewed in Waterbury, Connecticut on November 15,

1999 and Edmund Jayaraj Esq., Personnel Director for the City of Waterbury in Waterbury, Connecticut on November 8, 1999.

Mr. Carrozza as president of the UPFFA is the spokesperson for over 3,500 unionized career fire fighters in Connecticut and the President of Local #1339 which represents the Waterbury fire fighters. The interview consisted of questions that focused on the involvement of the local bargaining unit in the development of an employee evaluation program in the Waterbury Fire Department and the inclusion of the evaluation system in the collective bargaining agreement. Mr. Carozza discussed how an evaluation and appraisal might be used as an instrument in the promotional process, merit pay raises, and in formal disciplinary proceedings. A copy of the interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

Attorney Jayaraj as Personnel Director for the city of Waterbury is responsible for the adherence of the Civil Service Rules and all applicable employment laws for the city and its departments. The interview consisted of questions that focused on the legal requirements of an organization in the development of employee evaluations and appraisals, the potential for the use of evaluation system as an instrument in the promotional process used in the City of Waterbury, and their use in formal disciplinary proceedings. A copy of the interview questions can be found in Appendix C.

Assumptions

The procedures used to complete this research project were based on the following assumptions: (1) it was assumed that the persons interviewed answered the questions honestly based on the concerns for the organizations they represented, (2) that employees of the Waterbury Fire Department completing the survey were honest

and objective in their responses, (3) that those employees did not discuss their replies with one another, (4) respondents from the other fire departments answered both honestly and completely to the best of their ability, and (5) it was assumed that all authors included in the review performed objective and unbiased research.

Limitations

This research project was limited by the six-month time limit that was imposed by the National Fire Academy for the completion of the Executive Fire Officer applied research project. The time taken to conduct the literature review was insufficient as to allow the author to develop appropriate questions from the literature reviewed for the surveys. The time limit also affected the responses that were received from those surveyed. In that only 58% of the employees and only 63% of the fire departments responded to the survey the author felt that an additional request to those not completing the survey would have been beneficial.

Another limitation of this research was that the survey instrument could have been better developed with questions that were more appropriate. Before it being delivered to those being surveyed, the author did not have other persons sample the survey instrument. In conducting a sample survey, ambiguous questions and errors in instructions could have been identified and corrected.

In the survey instrument sent to other fire departments question number #3 instructions were not clear as to what should be done if the department did or did not conduct formal evaluation and appraisals. The departments that responded and did not conduct formal employee evaluation and appraisals should have been instructed to continue with question # 12, but were instead told to continue with question # 10. Thus

the results of questions #10 and #11 were skewed as departments that do not conduct formal employee evaluation and appraisals should not have had replies for the questions. Ten fire departments (12%) that do not conduct formal appraisals had replies. The survey form should have been more precise in its directions.

The process of distributing the survey to employees of the Waterbury Fire Department could have been better devised. An exact number of survey instruments were delivered to each fire company and bureau so that each employee assigned to that fire company or bureau could receive a copy. A list of those assigned was attached to the envelope and the supervisor would note who had been given a survey form. The completed forms were to be returned in the same envelope. The intent of this process was to allow every employee to have an opportunity to submit a completed form anonymously. The instructions that were given to the supervisors were not clear in how the forms were to be distributed and collected. The result of this was that there was not an accurate control of who completed the survey. It was then difficult to determine who had not had the opportunity to submit the forms. The process did not allow the author to survey completely the greatest number possible of the employees of the Waterbury Fire Department.

RESULTS

Three specific questions were identified for this research paper. The results of this research project were organized around the three questions presented below.

Research Question #1 - Is there a need for the Waterbury Fire Department to develop a formal employee appraisal and evaluation system?

None of the literature reviewed for this research project suggested any reason that employee appraisals should not be conducted. A Survey (Appendix E) conducted by the author from employees of the Waterbury Fire Department show that the majority of those employees evaluated by a supervisor have found the experience to be a good one. (Tables 1 and 2). Many of the employees who had not been evaluated commented in the survey that there was a need for such a program. Some of the employees who had not had good experiences with prior evaluation still felt that a better instrument, specific procedures and supervisor training would have made the experience a better one.

Table 1 Not Included. Please visit the Learning Resource Center on the Web at <http://www.lrc.fema.gov/> to learn how to obtain this report in its entirety through Interlibrary Loan.

Table 2 Not Included. Please visit the Learning Resource Center on the Web at <http://www.lrc.fema.gov/> to learn how to obtain this report in its entirety through Interlibrary Loan.

Research Question #2- What will be the purpose of an employee appraisal and evaluation system within the Waterbury Fire Department? Further, what evaluation and appraisal systems are other fire departments using to evaluate employees and for what purpose?

The survey found that employees felt the evaluations and appraisals could be used for a number of purposes. Of those, the one chose most often in the survey was- *Self-Evaluation*. (Table 3). Literature reviewed discussed the importance of feedback to employees.

Table 3 Not Included. Please visit the Learning Resource Center on the Web at <http://www.lrc.fema.gov/> to learn how to obtain this report in its entirety through Interlibrary Loan.

The survey also showed that employees felt that evaluations and appraisals could be a part of the promotional process. Edmund Jayaraj, Personnel Director for the City of Waterbury, discussed this as a possibility with the author. Mr. Jayaraj felt that with the proper instrument and training for supervisors in its use that employee

evaluations could be a valuable part of the promotional process. When formal employee evaluations and appraisals are conducted regularly and reviewed by the fire department it can use the system for evaluating and rating employees.

A large majority of fire departments, that responded to the survey (Appendix D), conduct formal employee evaluations (Table 4).

Table 4 Not Included. Please visit the Learning Resource Center on the Web at <http://www.lrc.fema.gov/> to learn how to obtain this report in its entirety through Interlibrary Loan.

When reviewing information from the surveys completed by those fire departments (Tables 5 and 6), the reasons for using employee evaluations in those departments were consistent with the purposes considered by Waterbury Fire Department employees. The greatest uses of evaluations by those departments are that they are requirements of the city and fire department. This is also true of the Waterbury Fire Department as they are required by the Civil Service Commission.

Table 5 Not Included. Please visit the Learning Resource Center on the Web at <http://www.lrc.fema.gov/> to learn how to obtain this report in its entirety through Interlibrary Loan.

Table 6 Not Included. Please visit the Learning Resource Center on the Web at <http://www.lrc.fema.gov/> to learn how to obtain this report in its entirety through Interlibrary Loan.

Presently the only reason for formal evaluations to be conducted in the Waterbury Fire Department is the requirement of the Waterbury Civil Service Commission (CSC). These evaluations are considered the final phase of the hiring and promotional process and “are used to validate the selection of an employee for promotion or employment. The supervisor can evaluate an employee’s attitude, attendance, and dependability,” according to Mr. Jayaraj. This process requires the employee’s supervisor to review and evaluate the employee at the end of a six-month probationary period. The process is formal with the instrument that is used supplied by the CSC (Appendix A). The document used is of a style known as a forced choice. The document lists several specific behaviors that every employee at any level of the organization will demonstrate. The supervisor is required to evaluate the employee behavior, document by choosing one of the categories available on the form, and to document further employee strengths and weaknesses. The supervisor must give an overall evaluation of the employee’s performance. The supervisor will then meet with the employee and allow the employee to read and sign the document. There is no requirement for discussion by either party.

When considering that personal goal setting and self evaluation to be closely related activities, the departments that responded showed that evaluations are used often for those purposes. (Table 3) According to the responses from Waterbury Fire Department employees, this was the primary purpose that they felt that evaluations should be used for.

The surveyed also showed employees felt evaluations need to be conducted annually and when an employee's probationary period has been completed. (Table 7) This is consistent as to when other departments are conducting evaluations. (Table 6)

Table 7 Not Included. Please visit the Learning Resource Center on the Web at <http://www.lrc.fema.gov/> to learn how to obtain this report in its entirety through Interlibrary Loan.

Research Question #3- What procedures will be used and what obstacles will the department need to overcome in developing an employee appraisal and evaluation system?

Edmund Jayaraj stated that a formal personnel evaluation system could be developed by the Waterbury Fire department and that those evaluations could have multiple uses. The present instrument is used for every employee within the City of Waterbury. It has been existence without any changes since 1965. During the interview with Mr. Jayaraj stressed that an evaluation system, "must measure job knowledge, job performance, and an employee's ability to perform". The instrument must be valid, reliable, and consistent. To determine the validity of the evaluation instrument a job analysis and job evaluation must be performed for each job classification within the fire department. This process of observing and recording information about the work performed by a specific employee in a specific position is accomplished through systematic observation of the job activities of each person including employee interviews. After this analysis, job classifications will be developed and descriptions written, according to the type of work performed, the skills required, and the other job related factors. This classification is accomplished by reviewing jobs, and grouping individuals into a classification hierarchy for the entire staff of the department. A job

description will be written for a group of positions. Presently the Waterbury Fire Department has developed those descriptions within the Waterbury Fire Department Rules and Regulations. (Waterbury Fire Department Rules and Regulations, 1999 pp. 3-21)

The Civil Service Commission sets forth the minimum requirements and personal qualifications specified for any employee who might be a candidate for a promotional position in the department. The job specification includes such things as work experience, skills, and abilities. An employee must meet these minimum requirements in order to test for any position within the Waterbury Fire Department.

An interview regarding the use of employee evaluations and appraisals was held with Peter Carozza, President of the UPFFA. In Connecticut, organized labor is required to negotiate under the guidelines as set forth in the MERA. The statute designates subjects that are permissible and those that are mandatory subject of negotiations. The law allows for only one bargaining unit for a fire department. All chief officers, fire officers, supervisors and fire fighters are members of the same bargaining unit. During the interview with Mr. Carozza, he stressed that, "It is important to know that the use of any program that evaluates employee's can only be done through the collective bargaining process. In negotiating the use of such a system the local bargaining unit and the city would be obligated to do so under the guidelines as set forth in the MERA." Mr. Carrozza went on to explain that although he could understand the possible benefits of such a program he was also aware of the potential for abuse by supervisors and Fire Chiefs. Mr. Carrozza continued, "Will the benefits to the employee and the fire department outweigh the potential for abuse? That is why the local bargaining unit must

become involved in the process of developing the system. How employee evaluations will be used and the process for those evaluations must be agreed to through the negotiation process.” Mr. Carozza outlined a number of specific areas that he felt at a minimum would need to agree on during negotiations, including:

- Training for evaluators
- Consistency of evaluators
- Storage of records and personnel files
- Privacy laws and Freedom of Information

In discussing the use of employee evaluations by the fire department, Mr. Carrozza explained that the use of a person’s evaluation as part of the disciplinary process could be an acceptable use of an evaluation. His concerns were for the use of an employee’s evaluation to generate a disciplinary process against that individual.

Mr. Carozza was aware of the present evaluation instrument used by the Civil service Commission for new recruit fire fighters and newly promoted officers and bureau heads in Waterbury. He stated” If there were to be any changes in the use of the instrument by the Civil Service Commission it would be a mandatory subject of negotiations. Whereby, the modification of the instrument is a permissible subject of negotiations.”

Traditionally, labor organizations have been opposed to any type of merit pay raises. The use of employee evaluations in determining merit raises was a subject that Mr. Carrozza felt would be a difficult one to have agreement on between any local bargaining unit in Connecticut and the city it is in. The discussion with Mr. Carozza determined that though the unions might have some concerns for the misuse of an

evaluation system, he felt that there were possibilities for their use. He stated that, " Both the employee and the fire department must benefit from such a system. "

Both Mr. Carozza and Mr. Jayaraj stressed the importance of compliance with applicable federal and state laws regarding the employees' civil rights, equal opportunities for promotion, and privacy laws.

DISCUSSION

The literature review supported the survey results of both the fire departments and employees of the Waterbury Fire Department. Felix Lopez states that " If an organization desires to foster excellence and self-renewal, it must devote considerable effort to the administration of an effective evaluation program." (Lopez 1968 p.20) There is a need to conduct formal evaluations by fire departments. After reviewing the data from the employees, the author found that seventy-three percent of those who have been evaluated state that, it was a good experience (Tables 1 and 2). The importance of employee feedback was stressed throughout the literature review. Analysis of employee surveys by the author indicated that sixty-one percent of the employees felt that the greatest purpose for evaluations could be for self-evaluation. The results showed that conducting evaluations annually was the consensus of the greatest number of employees. (Table 7)

Mr. Jayaraj stated that there is no formal training in the use of the evaluation instrument and the author is aware that there is also no management training for supervisors. Sixty-seven percent of the fire fighters felt that their supervisor was

adequately trained to conduct an evaluation. The analysis of the surveys of those supervisors shows that only forty-three percent of them felt that their own supervisors were trained (Table 1). Sixty-three percent of the supervisors felt that they were not adequately trained to conduct evaluations (Table 2). Surveys of other departments yielded similar results with only forty-one percent of the supervisors being trained to conduct evaluations (Table 4).

The author's analysis of the fire department surveys showed that even those departments that are not currently conducting formal evaluations are considering doing so. Presently, only sixteen percent of those departments conducting formal evaluations do so under the requirements of a collective bargaining agreement (Table 4). All but two of those departments are located in Connecticut. Seven additional departments in Connecticut are in the process of developing evaluation programs. Comments from those departments from Connecticut discussed that all were at some step in contract negotiations with the local bargaining unit in developing an evaluation system.

While conducting the literature review, the author discovered that there were numerous reasons why employee evaluation and appraisal systems were not successful in some organizations. The one problem that is most discussed is the lack of communication from the organization in describing to the employees what the system was intended to do. Donald Kirkpatrick explains that "communicate" means to create understanding. This means that everyone involved in the program must understand the what, why, when, where and how. (Kirkpatrick, 1982 p.92) Additionally, an important part of the communication process includes the training of supervisors. Mr. Jayaraj states that, "The supervisor must be trained in methods of evaluating and

communicating with subordinates. If she/he fails to communicate the purpose of the evaluation the entire process can become flawed.” (Jayaraj, 1999)

To initiate such a program it is important to meet with employees at every level of the organization. It is equally important to include the bargaining unit in all discussions during the development of the program. Mr. Carozza states that “No program can be successful without agreement and understanding by both management and labor in how the evaluations will be used.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

All information reviewed and analyzed showed a need for the Waterbury Fire Department to develop a formal employee evaluation and appraisal system. Information from employee surveys led me to believe that, though the present use of employee evaluations has not been revised in a long time and that supervisors are not trained in its use, employees have found their experiences with them to be good ones. This foundation will allow the parties concerned (the Fire Department, Union, Civil Service, and all employees) a good place to start the development process for an evaluation system.

Beginning with the present job descriptions, there must be job analysis's and job evaluations for each job classification within the fire department. This process of observing and recording information about the work performed by specific employees should be conducted in conjunction with each of the groups. With each group having some involvement in the development process there will be a greater opportunity for

success of the system. After the job analysis's are completed, job classifications will be developed and descriptions written, according to the type of work performed, the skills required, and the other job related factors. When employees know what is expected of them, they also will have a greater opportunity for success.

The intent of an employee evaluation and appraisal system is for both the individual as well as the department to meet their goals. Employees feel a need for the evaluations to assist them in self-evaluation and goal setting. The fire department must be sure that it is meeting its goal as an organization. Without support from the supervisors and fire fighters, the Department will not meet its goals. The Union and City, through the Civil Service Commission, must be participative members in developing and supporting the employee evaluation system.

I am recommending the following steps be taken in the development of an employee evaluation and appraisal system for the Waterbury Fire Department

- The present purpose of the employee evaluations should continue.
- The instrument presently used for probationary and promotional evaluations shall reviewed and revised as necessary.
- A committee be formed that will conduct a job analysis for each job classification within the Waterbury Fire Department.
- The committee should be made of management, labor, and employee representatives. Attempts should be made to have at least on person from each job classification on the committee.

- The committee can investigate evaluation and appraisal systems in use by other fire departments. Surveys and sample instruments to be provided from those fire departments surveyed for this research project.
- Each job analysis should be reviewed by the Civil Service Commission
- The Fire Chief, for the City, and the Union should discuss the use of the employee evaluation system.

Table 8 Not Included. Please visit the Learning Resource Center on the Web at <http://www.lrc.fema.gov/> to learn how to obtain this report in its entirety through Interlibrary Loan.

As several of the supervisors have recently been promoted to those positions (Table 8), there is an opportunity to begin a program that can be used by the department.

I am recommending a pilot program be instituted whereby the Deputy Chiefs and Bureau Heads will use the aforementioned procedures in developing a system. If there is agreement between the Union and the City the evaluation and appraisal system the records will not become a part of each employee's personnel file until it is determined to be adequate by both parties. A major focus on these evaluations should be for personal goal setting and self-evaluation.

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Appendices Not Included. Please visit the Learning Resource Center on the Web at <http://www.lrc.fema.gov/> to learn how to obtain this report in its entirety through Interlibrary Loan.